

# Hatchery Highlights

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Iron River NFH  
News and Updates

Fall 2005



### Topics this month:

- \*Friends Hike
- \*Coasters to Keweenaw
- \*Fall Fin Clipping
- \*Stocking Isle Royale
- \*Grand Portage Brook Trout Stocking
- \*Lake Trout Spawning Complete
- \*Fall Fingerling Stocking
- \*Excess Brood Stocked

### A FALL HIKE WITH FRIENDS!



The Friends of the Iron River National Fish Hatchery hosted a Fall Hike along the newly created trails through the hatchery property on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Old friends and new friends showed up to enjoy the fall colors on the picture perfect autumn day. The group started working on the trails this summer to get them user-friendly and hope to have them open to the public for cross country skiing by winter. The hike provided both enjoyable outdoor exercise and also ideas for what needs to be done before winter. Plans are in the works to set up a gravel parking lot and build small foot bridges to get over small springs along the trail for next summer. After the 1 ½ hour hike, great food was enjoyed by all at the potluck barbeque!

### RUNNING FOR THE BORDER AGAIN!

On August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005, 46,000 coaster brook trout found themselves on the way to Grand Portage, MN. As part of a new restoration plan, Iron River National Fish Hatchery again supplied coaster brook trout fingerlings to the tribe. 11,000 Tobin Harbor strain coaster fingerlings were stocked into Grand Portage Creek. 35,000 Siskiwit Bay strain coaster fingerlings were driven almost to the US/Canada border check station and then down a dirt road to the right of the border to be stocked into the Pigeon River. The Pigeon River helps to form part of the border between the US and Canada and flows into Lake Superior.

### COASTER BROOK TROUT PLANTED IN THE KEWEENAW



Fingerlings were carried in buckets down to the streams to be released.

Biologist Steve Redman stocked Coaster Brook Trout with assistance from personnel of the Keweenaw Bay Tribal Resources Department. Three streams, which are tributaries to Lake Superior located on Keweenaw Bay Tribal Community lands, were stocked with 2-3 inch fingerling brook trout that were reared at the Iron River National Fish Hatchery. Kelsey Creek and Zeba creek received 7,500 fingerlings each and the Silver River received 15,000 fingerlings. All fish released were marked with oxytetracycline and finclipped at the hatchery before release. This will allow biologists to monitor the status of the coasters in these habitats.

Beginning in 1997, this multiple year event which is coordinated between the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, was established to fulfill the rehabilitation plan for Lake Superior brook trout. The combined efforts have led to continued monitoring of coaster brook trout status, distribution, movement, and abundance of re-introduced fish. Along with these accomplishments, the tribe has also acquired additional land, performed stream habitat improvements, and removed barriers that would impact coaster recovery.

### HALFWAY THERE...

The lake trout spawning is now complete at the Iron River NFH... but the brook trout spawning is just beginning! This year Iron River NFH spawned a total of 760 female lake trout and collected over 4 million eggs. We would like to thank the following people who not only helped to keep our heads above water with spawning, but assisted us at times with other fish culture duties: Jenny Walker from Genoa NFH, Wayne Talo from Jordan River NFH, Jonathan Pyatskowit from Ashland FRO and Rick Nelson from LaCrosse FHC. This year's lake trout season was considerably easier and faster with the elimination of the Green Lake strain of lake trout. The Green Lake strain tends to spawn late and usually overlapped with the brook trout. This elimination helps the hatchery save time by not spawning these fish and keeping the unneeded eggs. These eggs were usually kept until a decision could be made whether they would be needed and required using additional formalin to treat for fungus. Getting the Green Lake fish out provided the hatchery with much needed raceway space in the brood building. Until now, all the brook trout brood fish were contained in one raceway, which for spawning entailed dividing the raceway into a minimum of 9 sections to keep the strains separated. This system still left us with combined year classes and required double the work. To fertilize the eggs, we would have to anesthetize and sort through double the amount of males in order to find enough of the correct year classes. The brook trout are now in 2 raceways, one with 6 sections to keep males separated by year class, spent fish from spawning fish and ripe females from green females. The other raceway has a total of 12 sections: 3 major sections to keep the 3 year classes of Tobin strain brook trout separated and then within those sections, 1 for spent males, 1 for unused males, 1 for ripe females and one for green females. The females from the Tobin strain

brook trout are placed in a third raceway after spawning. These raceway divisions reduce the stress on the fish by reducing the number of times they will have to be handled during spawning.

#### FIN CLIPPING GETS A JUMP START

Each year, one hundred percent of the lake trout produced at the Iron River National Fish Hatchery receive various fin clips prior to being distributed to the Great Lakes. The fin clips or "marks" vary by year and by lake. The marks make hatchery fish easily identifiable any time they are captured, and allow management biologists to determine stock and year class performance within a particular lake.

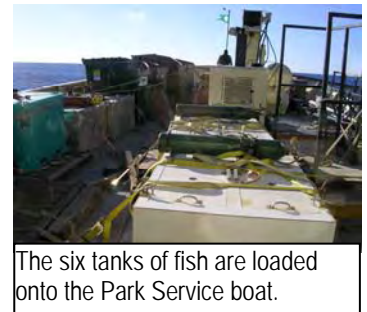
This year, fin clipping began in October to allow for marking a group of fall fingerlings that were sent to Lake Michigan in November. A crew of six employees marked fish for a total of 25 days. All in all, over 558,000 fish received fin clips. This equals nearly 20,000 fish per day and over 3,500 fish per person. Additional clipping will occur in January and February 2006, but due to the early start, nearly 40 percent of the work is completed.

#### EXTRA FISH FOR LAKE MICHIGAN

September fish inventories completed at the Iron River National Fish Hatchery reflected a 140,000 fish surplus of Green Lake strain lake trout. As a result, the hatchery consulted with the Green Bay Fisheries Resource Office to establish best use of the fish. On November 3, 2005 staff from Iron River and Pendills Creek National Fish Hatcheries hauled 137,750 fish weighing 3,150 pounds to Traverse City, Michigan. The fish were shore stocked in Grand Traverse Bay at the Maritime Academy site with assistance provided by Jordan River National Fish Hatchery. The extra fish provided additional support to our US v. Michigan 2000 Consent Decree requirements and added to our restoration efforts in Lake Michigan. We hope to receive funding in the future to continue to make use of surplus fish.

#### ISLAND DESTINATIONS

On September 12, 2005, approximately 71,000 coaster brook trout won an all expenses paid trip to Isle Royale National Park! Their trip included a midnight loading into tanks on trucks, a 4 hour drive to Houghton, Michigan and a lovely 3 hour cruise on board the Ranger Boat before they were released into Siskiwit Bay on the island on September 13<sup>th</sup>. Iron River National Fish Hatchery raised the brook trout from eggs collected from their captive brood fish which are descendents of wild coaster brook trout on Isle Royale. An additional 735 coasters raised at Genoa NFH began their trip around noon on September 12<sup>th</sup> and traveled to Iron River to meet up with their traveling companions. These fingerlings are part of an ongoing program to bring the coaster brook trout populations on Isle Royale back to their historical healthy numbers. Assistant Manager Kirt Schilling, Nick Starzl from Genoa NFH and Lee Newman from Ashland FRO participated in the fun and excitement of this stocking!



The six tanks of fish are loaded onto the Park Service boat.

#### LAKERS GO NORTH FOR THE WINTER



On November 1st, staff from the Iron River National Fish Hatchery loaded excess lake trout and headed for northern Minnesota. Green lake was the destination and is a part of the Red Lake tribal reservation. About 170 adult lake trout of the Green Lake Wild strain were released. The trout averaged between 22 and 29 inches in length and weighed between 5 and 10 pounds. Before release, each fish had a right pectoral fin and adipose fin removed. The reason for stocking these large fish is that the broodstock rearing facility is reaching capacity and younger fish are stepping up to take over their elders responsibilities. This was a win-win-win situation, in that the hatchery relieved some pressure on overcrowding issues, the tribe is going to benefit through outstanding recreational opportunities for young and old, and the fish will get to live out a long life and not be faced with the

possibility of being stocked into the ground.

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